

SSWH14: Analyze the Age of Revolutions



Element B: Identify the causes and results of the French Revolution (1789)

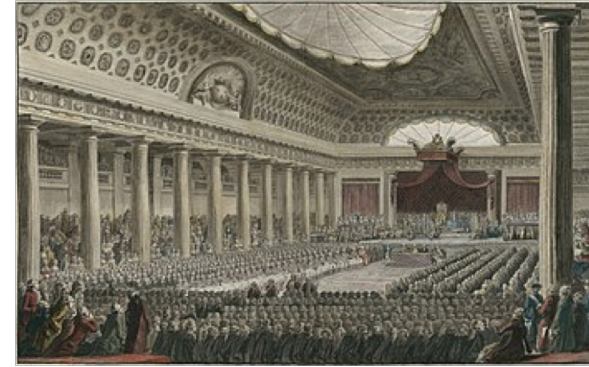
French Revolution (1789)

- ❑ While the Glorious Revolution of England and the American Revolution successfully and permanently implemented the principles of the Enlightenment, the French Revolution's success was short lived.
 - French society on the eve of the revolution was deeply divided into three groups.
 1. The First Estate, less than one percent of the population, was made up of the Catholic Clergy. This small group controlled an enormous amount of wealth and about ten percent of the land in France.
 2. The Second Estate was also a small group, just over one percent, made up of the hereditary nobility. The nobles owned about thirty percent of the land and controlled most of the key government and military positions.
 3. The remainder of the population, including the urban middle class, poor, and rural peasantry constituted the Third Estate.
- ❑ France was ruled by Louis XVI who attempted maintain the opulence and absolutism of his grandfather Louis XIV but a massive national debt made this nearly impossible.
 - Louis XVI's attempts to deal with this debt set into motion the events that would lead to the Revolution.



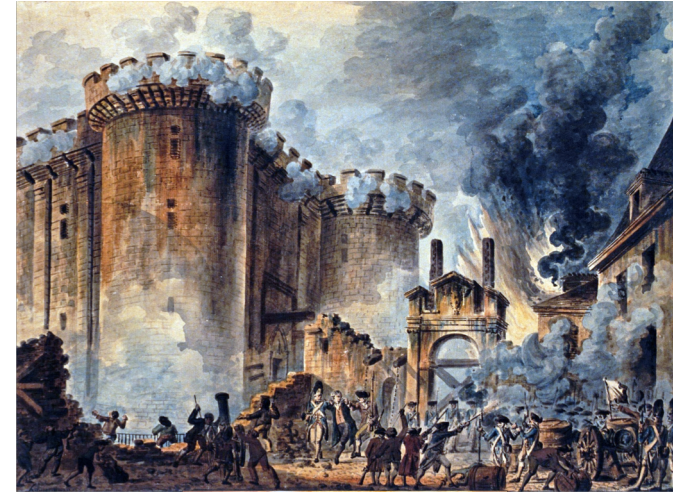
French Revolution (1789)

- In a desperate attempt to find a solution to the debt crisis, Louis XVI called together the French national legislature, the Estates General, in 1788.
 - Inspired by the Enlightenment ideals of the American Revolution, the Third Estate used this as an opportunity to voice concerns about the abuse of power and mismanagement of state funds by the king.
- Some members of the First Estate joined with the Third Estate and called for the creation of a National Assembly to draft a constitution for France.
 - This National Assembly hoped to make France a constitutional monarchy along the lines of Britain.
 - In the hopes of stopping this, the king ordered the Third Estate locked out of the meeting of the Estates General.
 - The Third Estate responded by finding an alternative location to meet, a tennis court.
 - Here, they swore not to disband until France had a constitution.



French Revolution (1789)

- Meanwhile as the arguments of the Estates General spilled into the streets of Paris, mobs of poor Parisians stormed the Bastille on July 14th 1789.
 - The Bastille, a prison and armory, was an important symbol of the king's power.
 - With the National Assembly determined to write a constitution and the common people controlling the streets of Paris change was inevitable.



- The National Assembly drafted the Declaration of the Rights of Man but Louis XVI continued to resist change.



- In October 1789 food shortages provoked the women of Paris to march on the King's palace of Versailles to demand that Louis and his family return to Paris to help the people.
- Louis complied and for the next two years France was reshaped into a constitutional monarchy.



à Versailles à Versailles le 5 Octobre 1789

French Revolution (1789)

- ❑ As the French Revolution became increasingly radical, neighboring kings began to worry that the revolution might spread.
 - Threats from Prussia and Austria provoked war which embolden French nationalism and drove the Revolution even more radical.
 - A new constitution abolished the nobility and confiscated Church lands.
- ❑ In 1792 Louis XVI attempted to escape to Austria where he hoped to gain assistance from the Austrian monarchy to restore his power in France.
 - Louis and his family were captured during their escape attempt and the king and his wife Marie Antoinette were found guilty of treason and beheaded.



French Revolution (1789)

- ❑ After the death of the king, France became a republic controlled by an elected National Convention.
 - The dominant party in the National Convention, the Jacobins, was determined to radically transform France into utopian democratic republic of virtue that fully realized the ideas espoused in the Enlightenment.
 - This government implemented radical change like forcing priests to marry, establishing a new calendar that counted forward from the founding of the Republic instead of the birth of Jesus, and transforming churches into Temples of Reason.
- ❑ This change was led by the leader of the Jacobin party Maximilien Robespierre.
 - Robespierre felt that the greatest threat to the realization of the republic of virtue was from counter-revolutionaries inside France.
 - He tasked the Committee of Public Safety with identifying and eliminating this threat.
 - 40,000 people were executed by the Committee of Public Safety and 300,000 more were imprisoned during what came to be known as the Reign of Terror in France.
- ❑ Instead of suppressing counter-revolutionary sentiment, the Reign of Terror emboldened it.
 - In July of 1794 the National Convention voted to arrest Robespierre, a few days later he was executed by guillotine.



French Revolution (1789)

- ❑ With Robespierre gone, the National Convention began to undo the most radical changes of the Revolution.
 - A new, more conservative and less democratic constitution was adopted and a new government called the Directory was formed.
- ❑ The Directory failed to restore security after the chaos of the Reign of Terror leading to a coup d'etat by Napoleon Bonaparte, a French General, and the almost complete dismantling of democratic republican governance in France until the second revolution in 1848.

